

A Belgian

By PAULINE BRADFORD MACKIE

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All right Maurice Beaujon was possessed with the certainty that Jean was lying, wounded, in the open field. He knew the lad trusted him to come, so Beaujon tossed as a mother might and could scarcely wait for the dawn.

He talked to Jean. The stars were palling.

"There, so, Jean," he reached for his boots—"so, Jean, keep up your courage."

He raised his flask and tasted of its contents:

"So, Jean, a few drops, they put heart in a man."

He stuffed a loaf of bread into his knapsack.

"Now, a crumb, Jean—so!"

He gathered up gauze and dressing for a wound and thrust it into his knapsack.

"So now, Jean, let us see. Ah-h-h, that is bad, but we'll get you well, my dear, in this bandage. They'll do better for you at the hospital, but this will serve till we get there."

He flung his knapsack over his back.

"So, Jean, put your arms around my neck, gently, gently; I'll not let you fall. That's better, eh?" He laughed.

"The uh-lans didn't get you, Jean."

It was gray when he went down the road. People had their houses open, but the shop windows were closed. At the city gate an officer talking with a sentry recognized Maurice.

"Hello, Beaujon!" he called. "You have been promoted for bravery."

Beaujon nodded as a matter of course. He had fought like a demon to kill men; he must have yelled like a maniac; his throat was raw inside; he had risen to a kneeling position in the trenches to snatch a flag which had been shot away from Jean, and he had waved it high above his head to cover the retreat of his companions.

And then the uh-lans were on him again, but he was up and running with the flag, and he had escaped; somehow he had escaped. It was a miracle. He never doubted Jean's safety until the lad could not be found.

"Where are you going, Beaujon?"

"For Jean," Beaujon answered.

"Valles, he is missing!" the officer asked. "Have you been through the hospitals?"

"He is not in them," Beaujon answered.

This delay tortured him. He knew he could make his search better before the sun was up, for the gleam of the bayonets had dazzled him yesterday, and from the field they would flash in his eyes now.

Beaujon pointed. "Valles can't be far," he tressed. "We were right in those trenches, just back of those bushes."

"Well, go on, then," said the officer; "but be cautious. Remember the wounded have been taken off the field. You won't find him alive."

"Alive," thought Beaujon impatiently; "no, not if this talking keeps up much longer." He saluted and burst away.

He stepped out into the field. He had known he should see the rifles and the bayonets first, but they did not flash upon his eyes.

No, they were dull and gray like the sky. He gazed blankly into the zenith; his first instinct was to look away from the ground.

There was still star-shining; it was yellow and very faint. He met its gaze. It looked at him steadily, blinked and went out. The thought of Jean gripped him, and he forced himself to look down again over the field.

There were spots on the bushes; thin, slow streams furrowed the ground; as the light increased these sluggish trickles, these splashes, were scarlet.

This was a shambles; the world a slaughterhouse.

All the panoply of war was gone; all that made it brilliant, all that gaudied him on, was gone. Why had he been promoted for bravery?

He was not brave now.

His mind was confused; he must stop; he must be clear. There was a word which would help him if he could remember it.

He pressed his hand to his forehead, struggling for that word. Ah, he had it! Sure, He must be sane.

He strode firmly forward, looking neither to the right nor to the left, his gaze on those bushes just beyond the field.

He heard low moans and cries, but he did not heed them.

Something moved in a heap of bodies. How dead men struggled! He passed on. There, out on a free space of ground, a dead Belgian was lying forward on his face.

Beaujon paused. Clutched in the man's hand was an arm. He stared. Then he saw that the man's other arm had been shot off.

His heart jumped.

Could that slender fellow be Jean? He went forward and turned him over. When he saw the face of a stranger he began to laugh.

Now that the fellow did not prove to be Jean, he was how comical it was. What did he expect to do with his arm. Run to the hospital with it to have it sewed on?

Beaujon pursued his search, chuckling.

word which would help him. He knew it was important, but he had forgotten it again.

He hummed a tune—a little, old, Alsatian tune—as he continued his search; the men whose faces he looked at made no impression on him; he only knew they were not Jean.

The sun flashed on the bayonets and sabers lying about; it was pretty as a sparkling sea.

He bent over a body. Some instinct made him rise and whirl about on his heels.

He was face to face with one of the uh-lans. The German was on foot. Each man was but a mirror of the other; so identical were their expressions; each had believed himself alone searching for a friend. They stared at each other; they turned; they ran in opposite directions as if pursued by demons.

The fight was out of both of them. Beaujon dropped his rifle as he ran. Horror was on his heels. He stumbled and fell and lay as if dead, then reached slowly for his rifle.

As his hand gripped it he realized that it must be another man's, for he had dropped his own.

He sat up and looked over the field. The enemy had disappeared. He turned his head, and there beside him lay Jean. It was Jean's rifle he held. He smiled at the smile on Jean's face that the lad was dead.

Only dead men were happy like that; that is, the right sort of dead.



He Chucked Again.

men, not the kind who struggled to get back to life.

Jean's blue eyes looked straight up into the sky.

Beaujon touched the boy's face.

It was still warm. Then he knew that pale star which blinked at him and went out was a signal from Jean. He wished he could lie down beside him, but he had promised to return.

He had been promoted for bravery, this Beaujon. Who was the fellow, Beaujon, Beaujon, Beaujon. But he had promised to get back to him. He must find Beaujon again.

He lifted Jean on his back and started homeward. It was strange that he was carrying Jean's rifle instead of his own.

It was a message that he must fight for them both. He was grim but exultant as he strode on. Where he had killed one man before, now he would kill two; it would be double the number, always, double for Jean.

The ground was uncertain and he stumbled; then he realized he was trampling over the dead with his boots on. He laid Jean down and took off his boots, then lifted his friend again and went on in his stocking-feet.

When he came into the city again no one offered to help him, for Beaujon was a giant in strength and he bore Jean as though he had been a girl.

He climbed the road and turned into a small hotel.

Mme. Valles sat at the table with the one guest left in the hotel; she was having an extra cup of coffee with her and they were talking about the war.

Beaujon's figure filled the doorway and his shadow fell across the two women.

Mme. Valles raised her hands. She was going to cry out, but somehow she held her tongue and managed to get to a door; it opened into her bedroom.

"Put him here, Maurice. Can you get a doctor?"

Beaujon laid Jean down on his mother's bed. He patted Mme. Valles' cheek so softly in his pity.

"No, Jean does not need a doctor, Mama Valles."

He went out, closing the door on the two women who were a stranger in the dining room, and he remembered Mme. Valles did not like curious eyes.

He sat down in the first chair he reached, exhausted.

The guest in the hotel was an American, Miss Dewey. She had expected to join friends in Berlin. She kept saying to herself that she had never expected this war when she went abroad.

When she saw Beaujon's pallor she ran to the kitchen and called Marie, the young girl who assisted Mme. Valles as a kind of underhousekeeper, to bring hot coffee at once.

"They have brought home Mme. Valles' son dead," she exclaimed, "and I think the man who brought him is ill. He looks so white."

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered Marie. Her hand shook so she kept pouring the coffee into the saucer instead of the cup.

"Here," said Miss Dewey, "I will attend to that." She seized the coffee pot and poured the coffee with a steady hand. "Now you bring a basin of warm water to wash his feet. They are bleeding and his stockings are cut in shreds."

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered Marie. "Please tell me—where is Jean?"

"His mother has him in her room. She has shut the door. Hurry with that basin, Marie." Miss Dewey went back to Beaujon. "Try to take a little of this coffee. It will do you good."

Beaujon lifted his heavy eyes to her face. "Thank you."

Marie came hurrying in with towels and a basin of water and, kneeling down, peeled off the ragged stockings with tender fingers. She was young and dark and richly colored.

Suddenly she pressed Beaujon's bare feet to her bosom, sobbing, while she murmured: "My Jean, my Jean!"

She was to have married Jean Valles in the autumn.

Beaujon's brows contracted with pity. "Poor Marie!" he said. "Poor Marie!" His mind seemed entirely clear again.

The coffee helped him. He watched her as she sat back on her heels, letting his feet drop into her lap and looking up pitifully at him.

"Now, I shall have no husband."

"I saw her poor, little, drooping mouth, the woe in her eyes."

It was more than grief for Jean. It was desolation come upon her. The issues of life were cut off. She would have no husband, no children. Why was she left a woman?

"This was what war did for women!" Beaujon spoke with difficulty, for his throat was so dry, too; and he was I will return and be your husband."

When she saw the kindness on his face she bent forward and laid her face against his breast, sobbing. He patted her shoulder until she grew quiet. Then he said: "Now, I must be going."

Miss Dewey was crying, too. She ran out to get him another cup of coffee. "What a good man," she thought.

Marie knelt and dried his feet and put a pair of clean stockings on him. They were Papa Valles', as were also the boots, she brought. Papa Valles had been in the war, too; and he was a big man like Beaujon, not slight like Jean. Jean was so pretty—like a girl. Her tears fell more gently.

Beaujon pulled on the boots. He took the coffee, hands with Miss Dewey. "Good-by," he said. "When you return to your own country remember us."

She stood on the steps of the hotel, while Marie followed him to the road. "What," she said, "I was forgetting something."

He thrust his hand into his pocket and drew forth a big key and gave it to Marie. "It is the key to my shop. I do not come back all its yours."

She took it as a child might. "Yes," she kept her eyes fixed wistfully on Beaujon's face.

"Good-by," he said, and bent to kiss her cheek; then suddenly drew her into his arms and kissed her mouth.

The blood coursed freely through his veins once more. That kiss—so fresh, so sweet—had revived him. It was as though Marie had become a stranger, who was carrying down the hill, in love at first sight.

Their love sprang new born from this moment; it had no past. He went off down the road with a swinging step, his shoulders squared. The good God meant well by man. His hand must be over this somehow—yes—over it all.

"Where is his shop, Marie?" asked Miss Dewey.

"She found it one down on that side, mademoiselle," answered Marie.

"Oh, that beautiful lace shop!" Miss Dewey exclaimed. "There are some wonderful rose-pieces in the window."

"Yes, mademoiselle," Marie answered. "Oh, that beautiful lace shop!"

Miss Dewey exclaimed. "There are some wonderful rose-pieces in the window."

"Good-by, my wife!" he said, and she was done her the honor. Mrs. Dracon began.

"Perhaps I should have spoken first to you," said the prince, talking rapidly. "But I said, 'This is America, where there must not be too much formality.' Besides, I was crazy-crazy with love—as I have been ever since first I looked at her."

"No scene, please," cautioned Elizabeth. "The band singer, and a frenzied leader, was singing and banging through a Hungarian rhapsody, giving promise that it would still be safe to talk about private matters for a long time to come."

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"Look Out! He's Coming Over."

The heir of Hohenstaufen dropped into the chair that a waiter had already pushed into position, gave one meaning look at Elizabeth's dragon, then turned once more to the older woman.

"As soon as I learned you had gone, then I left," he said.

Elizabeth bit her lip, while her mother smiled sadly.

"A coincidence," said Mrs. Dracon. "A coincidence," conceded the prince, "but designed by me."

He looked from mother to daughter. Mrs. Dracon was listening intently, no doubt, although she was crazy-crazy like her father, she was preoccupied with something else. The daughter's eyes met his with the suspicion of a challenge in them.

Hadn't they settled this, once and for all, that night the prince had proposed to her over in Philadelphia?

"You see," he said, "with an effort at lightness, 'I got to thinking over what Miss Dracon said to me about international marriages. I don't see how it applies to us. I know that she is not crazy for a title—other than her own high-born name; and me, I'm not after—after money.'"

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word, while other trains rushed by with lordly authority. Soldiers who belated, brusque, impersonal, had jerked the door of the compartment open at times, had stared and talked among themselves, but had answered no questions.

Even more lugubrious was the deepening night. It had begun to rain. Then, finally, as though the wounded worm was completely exhausted, the train came to a halt and moved no more.

There was another hour of stifling misery, then once more the door was jerked open and there came the order in the clipped, military German of Prussia:

"All passengers get down!"

It was almost panic as the shuddering civilians—men, women and children, Dutch, Belgian, French, English, American—clambered out; but information somehow got about that here they were to remain until mobilization was complete, that there was a hotel in the neighborhood that was to be their temporary prison.

"And what is the name of the place?" Elizabeth asked a mammoth Belgian, who, with his wife and four children, had been their climatic throughout the day.

Said the Belgian: "This is Hohenstaufen!"

A moment later she and her mother were leaning against each other for mutual support.

"Very stiff and straight in a new uniform, surrounded by officers who were showing him obvious respect, there stood under the yellow shimmer of the station light some one whom they both had instantly recognized—Prince Frederick."

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